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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.



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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF THE

LORD RECTOR OF THE MARISCHAL COLLEGE AND
UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN.

BY

LORD ROBERTSON, LL.D.

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN,

I have too profound a sense of the honour you have conferred on me, and too high an opinion of the nature of the duty I now undertake in addressing you from this place, to trust to the expression of the moment for the acknowledgment of the one, or to my own habit in public speaking to do justice to the other. I therefore, however inadequately, have set down, at such leisure as I could find amongst other duties, the sentiments awakened by this most unlooked-for mark of your kindness—your confidence in me, and your approbation of my public character. I have, also, thus recorded the suggestions which I shall venture to offer for your consideration, from the honoured station to which you have been pleased to nominate one, who, till now, was a total stranger to you, and who can yet claim no link to unite him with you, excepting partiality on your part, and gratitude on his. It has been well said, “that a tried friend is better than a new one.” But every old friend was new once, and, if he be worthy, keep the new one till he become old.

I have been called here neither from local associations, nor from high rank, nor from the power of conferring benefits, nor from classical attainments, nor from any literary reputation which might embolden me to aspire to so proud a distinction. I most unfeignedly confess that I never expected to receive this honour, considering how many have greatly higher pretensions. Among these, permit me (so far as I am entitled to form a judgment on the subject) to rank that distinguished individual who, as I learned after the election was closed, had been supported by many of your number. He is a gentleman not less illustrious by his eminence and profound knowledge as a statesman, and by his attractive and powerful eloquence, so well adapted "the applause of listening Senates to command," than by his high attainments as an author. With a master's hand he has fathomed the depths of the human heart, portrayed, with a glowing pencil, on his graceful page, the varied scenes of life, amid the excitement of conflicting passions. He has had the gift to mingle, as it were, the lingering ray of the olden time, and the halo of eastern magnificence, with the steadier and more sober light of these later days, ruling over this, mayhaps, less dazzling hemisphere; and has thus displayed the glories of that intellectual system whose meridian power triumphs over all the darkness of the past, illuminating, on the one hand, the splendours of wealth, and the intricate pathways of statecraft; and, at the same time, piercing, on the other, the bar of the prison, and dispelling alike the vapours of the lazarus, and the mists which brood over the harsh retreats where congregated poverty finds

a cheerless shelter. Let me not, however, while I thus most respectfully offer this tribute to Mr. D'Israeli's varied accomplishments, and when I declare that I was at the time entirely ignorant of his nomination, so far disparage your judgment in the selection as to avow that, while I thus most sincerely and gratefully acknowledge your preference, and admit my own deficiencies—I say I must not avow that I am entirely unworthy of your choice.

In the first place, I am your fellow-countryman, with no views, and few associations beyond this land of freedom, worth, integrity, truth, and independence—a land where the grandeur of external nature—notwithstanding the rudeness of our climate—does not surpass the fervid cultivation of our soil, or the enlightened education of our people. If our snow-clad mountains, our lonely heaths, our thundering torrents, our silent lakes, and tarns remote—our rocks that echo to the scream of the eagle, or the roar of the dashing wave, awake the sympathies of the poet, and elevate the soul of the meditative wanderer, do not our rich and varied plains respond to the note of the lark, the linnet, and the thrush? Do not the waving corn and the blooming clover catch every summer breeze, while countless exotics make our gardens glow as if a southern sun smiled on their opening bosoms; and, above all, amid these external glories, hath not the tree of education been planted amongst us—reared her lofty branches, despite the rudest gales—taken root within the hearts and affections of our people, and, flourishing in the vigour of progressive advance-

ment, brought shelter and consolation to all who seek her hallowed shades, and lavishing on those who gather thence the fruit that will not die, sent them forth so laden that every region of the habitable globe is proud to give them welcome? I, therefore, claim, with you, the endearing sympathies of a Scotsman; and I trust the day is not far distant when many of you may do honour to the land of your birth, and be ranked among her most enlightened sons.

In the next place, perhaps it was some claim on your choice that I had, on the strength of a Scottish academical education only, unaided, as I trust I may say, by any advantages, excepting such as are open to all, attained to high preferment in the exercise of an arduous and honourable profession. I cannot but remember, on an occasion so gratifying to myself as the present, that my brethren at the bar deemed me not unworthy to be placed at their head—the proudest distinction to which a Scottish lawyer can aspire; and, when I look back to my labours there, however conscious of my inferiority to many of my illustrious predecessors, it is satisfactory to reflect that I always endeavoured to bring to the discharge of my duties perfect independence—an earnest desire fearlessly to assert the interests of my client, and, at the same time, a resolution to take no advantage which fair dealing and personal honour did not fully justify. I have since been called to higher, and, mayhap, more sacred duties, of which event I would wish to say no more than this, that I hope the confidence which you have shown by conferring on me the office in which

I am now installed, proves, on the one hand, so far, that I have not failed, at least, very signally, in the past ; and animates me, on the other, with the determination to be still more zealous for the future. Such a mark of generous and respectful confidence from the young cannot be too highly appreciated by advancing years, and public approbation of every kind ought chiefly to be cherished because it animates to further exertion.

May I, in conclusion on this subject (and which, so far as I am individually concerned, I am most anxious to dismiss), may I add, that possibly you were in some degree guided by the consideration that,—although engaged in the duties, the almost absorbing duties of my vocation ;—I have shown my love for literature, and my conviction that even its lightest offerings may not be unappropriately gathered during such leisure as the bustling Barrister, or the meditative Judge may command. Our Laureate, indeed, when asserting his well won sway over the realms of fancy, would banish us, sons of Themis, from these lofty regions, nor suffer us even to drop a tear over the Poet's grave—

“ A lawyer art thou ? draw not nigh,
Go carry to some fitter place
The keenness of that practised eye,
The hardness of that sallow face.”

You have pronounced no such anathema on me. You have welcomed me with courtesy and honour to these academic halls, and in regarding the profession to which I belong as no ban of exclusion, you have acted with a wise and liberal spirit. The character of our pursuits

ought not to debar us from anything which savours of learning, or generous rivalry, or classic ornament. Has not the fervid pleader, who uplifts his voice to denounce the false caluminator, or defend the injured; who pursues through its wiles the secret fraud, and manfully asserts the rights of the poor; hath he not “ample room and verge enough,” to embrace, within his varied oration, the whole wealth of the schools? Or, ought not he who is selected to weigh conflicting testimonies, and adjudicate on contested and intricate rights, to be robed in learning as well as truth,—for what, may I ask, is justice herself but the perfection of Philosophy, the guardian of all our sacred rights and privileges, reared in the pensive citadel of arduous study, and endowed with the treasures of classic refinement?

And now, gentlemen, having spoken perhaps too much of myself, I approach what with earnest sympathy I should wish to say of you, and of the venerable institution where the labours of some of you have but commenced, and of others are on the eve of being terminated. All ought to be grateful for, and I have no doubt, all are duly sensible of the benefits which an academical education is fitted to confer. In the present age, indeed, this is indispensable, not only for such as propose to enter into any of the higher professions, but for every one who, in any department of life, means to qualify himself for intercourse with those who are raised above the class of ordinary mechanics. Education seems, amid the rapid extension of the arts, and the wondrous developments of science, to be advancing in our days with unexampled

speed and security. The mighty river flows on in a benignant and fertilizing stream. Everywhere around us are springing up Philosophical Institutions, Mechanics' Institutes, Normal Schools, Ragged Schools, (as to which last this city has given a noble example) Athenæums, and Libraries, with countless lectures on all subjects, and showers of Magazines, Repertories, Encyclopædias, Compendiums, and the like. So far from speaking of these disparagingly, or with anything approaching to regret that education is shedding her gifts among the humbler classes, I hail with delight this universal dissemination of knowledge. Abundant knowledge must ever bring countless blessings in her course, and fortunately her fountain is exhaustless. She is fitted not only to adorn the lordly hall, but to bring refinement to the peasant's cot.

“ Her track, where'er the goddess roves,
 Glory pursue, and generous shame
 Th' unconquered mind and freedom's holy flame.”

He is, indeed, unworthy of her name who would wish to see her bounties distributed with a churlish hand. No ! let all quaff freely of these refreshing waters. But permit me to remind *you*, that the contemplation of the great exertions now making by the humbler of our citizens to secure some share of her favours, renders it the more imperative on you to pursue your studies with still more earnest devotion, and to resolve not, in any degree, to hazard the position in which more favourable fortune may have placed you. When I use the expression, “ pursue your studies,” I do not mean to exclude those who are about to quit this place. Far from it ;

for well may it be asked, who is he that shall say his education is complete, and when is the hour that the most learned and zealous would venture to cherish the thought that he has no further knowledge to acquire?

In these later days, I have said, that all we see around us calls loudly on the higher educational establishments for energy and resolution to advance in sterling knowledge and useful attainments. Many are accustomed to talk highly of the good old times, as if the present age were indeed degenerate. I do not mean the days of Roman grandeur, or Athenian refinement, nor even the less classical ages, when the ecclesiastical retreats of more modern times embraced within their cloistered precincts almost the whole knowledge of advancing civilization. But I allude to the condition of our own land, from the period when our Universities were first established, ranging from the endowment of St. Andrew's, in the beginning of the fifteenth, to your own charter in the close of the sixteenth century. There were, indeed, during that eventful era, considering the rude state of society, vast exertions made in the cause of learning, and wonderful it is to contemplate the existence and prosperity of such peaceful institutions, and the manner in which they were cherished in those turbulent times. Even in the year 1593, when your original establishment took place, how striking the contrast presented by the state of Scotland to her position now. King James, no doubt, held himself forth as the patron of learning, but his was not the learning of a liberal, graceful, and generous, scholar. In the preceding year,

the Presbyterian Church government had been acknowledged. But I fear these days cannot boast either of much refinement, or enlightened administration of the laws, or genuine freedom, or pure morality. We need not wander beyond the precise date I am now contemplating for examples. What think you of the moral condition of the country when, in that very year which gave birth to this College, such was the ordinary and public desecration of the Sabbath, that an Act was passed by the Legislature, altering the market-day of the Royal Burgh of Forfar to Friday from *Sunday*, and declaring that the same should “stand with the like privileges and freedoms, as the Sunday did of before?” Or, with what satisfaction can it be supposed the duties of the Supreme Judges were at that time discharged, when, “in order to remedy the corruption in this declining age,” as another statute of the same year bears, it was enacted that, to secure the wise and independent administration of the laws, no one should be received as “a Senator in the College of Justice, except he be sufficiently tried and knawn be his Heines and haill Lords of the Session.” And to fit him for his ordeal, what are the qualifications? Strangely, indeed, do they sound in our ears—“That the said person to be presented and received have, in yearly rent, properly pertaining to himself, the summe of ane thousand markes usual money of this realme, or els twenty chalders of victual.” And that his experience, quality, and conversation, may be the better tried, what do you imagine was required? That he be profoundly skilled in the civil and canon law—that he hold academical degrees—that he has en-

joyed long and constant practice in his profession ? Not at all. The sole condition is, as expressed in the quaint language of the day—that he be of the age of twenty-five years, at the least, “compleat in all time coming, otherwise his presentation and admission to be null, annulland all presentations given and granted be his Majesty, sin his Hienes’ coronation, to quhatsoever person or persons not beand of the age aforesaid.” Such was the mature age required by the wisdom of our ancestors. Yet, verily, I think it may be doubted whether I may say of any of these my predecessors, as the Jew does of Portia—

“O ! wise young judge, how do I honour thee !

How much more elder art thou than thy looks.”

I select these enactments as illustrative of my observation, because they point to matter of history, as to which there can be no contention, and your own knowledge of the times will supply you with many others, more familiar, and, probably, more apposite. But still, in these rude days, the seed was sown, and learning has, indeed, progressed amongst us. I am aware that we cannot boast of such magnificent institutions as adorn the mightier kingdom with which we are so happily united. We have not the noble and time-honoured fountains of Oxford or Cambridge, whence the stream of learning gushes with such copious and refreshing vigour, over that enlightened land. We cannot vaunt of her high position among nations, her more genial climate, nor of the princely endowments of her powerful hierarchy. Our seminaries are of a different character, and more

interwoven with the habits and pursuits of the ordinary ranks of a people who may not claim the commanding influence of wealth. Yet, the institutions which we cherish have admirably adapted themselves to our wants. They have armed for the intellectual conflicts of scholar-craft and science, a goodly number of our youth, while, at the same time, they have sent forth humbler, but well-appointed levies to aid in the struggles of commercial enterprise and legal acumen, and to give effectual advice and consolation in the chamber of the sick, or in the house of prayer.

And I fear not, that, animated by the same spirit with those who have gone before you, and done honour to the instructions here delivered, you will duly appreciate the importance of the various branches of knowledge forming the usual curriculum of study. It is unnecessary to say anything of mere direct professional education, for it is too obvious that, without this, it would be vain, indeed, for any one to commence a professional career, with the smallest prospect of success. In the necessarily advancing state of practical knowledge in all professions, prelections on the subject are indispensable, and they who have succeeded best in the department which they have chosen, are best qualified to judge of the great loss they have sustained, in not having more vigorously devoted every available hour of their College tuition in the study appropriate for the illustration of their art or science—to its ardent cultivation. Nor is he a true master of his craft, who thinks he has ever studied too much, or that he has left no depth unfat-

thomed. In illustration, may I remark, that a late much lamented friend of my own, after attaining to the highest position as a surgeon, perhaps, in Europe, never began a day in the full tide of his practice, during the session of that University, of which he was a distinguished ornament, without as careful and anxious an exercise in practical anatomy, as if the mysteries of the human frame had, for the first time, been unveiled before him. The most accomplished professor continues the most careful student.

What I would wish to say, however, more especially regards the less obviously utilitarian branches of study, and particularly the classics of Greece and Rome. It has often been a subject of controversy, whether our youth are not too much occupied in the mere acquisition of the dead languages, and in the attainment of what is graceful and ornamental only, while more pressing and important branches of learning, far better adapted for the practical purposes of life, are omitted or postponed. But I think experience and sound argument have established that the best foundation for any system of education, intended to secure the highest exertions of the intellectual faculties in after life, is a basis of classical knowledge. More may be easily, or at all events less presumptuously suggested on this subject perhaps from negative than positive testimony; more are entitled to speak from the consciousness of deficiency, than from the treasures of a redundant store. Many of us, indeed, may regret having too little learning of this kind; whoever felt that he had too much, or who can tell at

what hour, or in what emergency, the hoards of such a harvest,—ay, the mere gleanings of the schools,—may not add the proudest laurel to the wreath of his triumphs, in whatever department of science or philosophy his eminence has been secured? And I cannot but think that, in the generous rivalry of academic ambition, in the zeal of ardent emulation, in the display of success, and in the friendly acknowledgments of competitors, who are always proud to see the prize awarded to the victor in that arena—I say, I cannot but think that, in this manner, the benefits of classical learning are best prompted, and its refinements and sympathies best secured. There have, indeed, been many Utopian schemes, and much extravagant discussion on this head. But, I think, they have all at last given way to the existing time-honoured system. Nor have these theories been confined to rash speculators, or the mere supporters of innovation, who look more to the novelty and attraction of change than to its effects. Milton, himself one of the most profound thinkers whom the world has produced, had views on this subject, which, in his celebrated treatise entitled, “Of education,” are advocated, in my humble opinion, with more zeal and eloquence than solid reasoning. There are no doubt in that essay some noble passages, and many sound reflections and ingenious speculations. But his attack on the accustomed mode of teaching both the languages and the arts, experience has shown to be unmerited. Is there really any ground for saying that, as to the study of Latin and Greek, “that which casts our proficiency therein so much behind, is our time lost, partly in too oft idle vacancies, given both to schools

and universities ; partly in a preposterous exaction forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses, and orations, which are the acts of ripest judgment, and the final work of a head filled by long reading and observing, with elegant maxims and copious invention ?” Or, has the writer any authority for maintaining as to the Arts, “ I deem it to be an old error of the universities, not yet well recovered from the scholastic grossness of barbarous ages, that instead of beginning with arts most easy (and there be such as are most obvious to the sense), they present their young unmatriculated novices at first coming with the more intellectual abstractions of logic and metaphysics ; so that they having but newly left those grammatic flats and shallows, where they stuck unreasonably to learn a few words with lamentable construction, and now on the sudden transported under another climate to be tossed and turmoiled with their unballasted wits, in fathomless and unquiet deeps of controversy, do, for the most part, grow into hatred and contempt of learning—wrecked and deluded all the while with ragged notions and babblements, while they expected worthy and delightful knowledge, till poverty or youthful years call them importunately their several ways.”

I refrain from farther citation, and rather adopt the eloquent answer of his eminent biographer, Dr. Symmons, who, though speaking of his author with profound respect, puts the defence of the existing system on its true foundation—“ Many able men, offended at the number of years devoted by our public schools to the attain-

ment of language, have indulged in some similar speculations, and have endeavoured to crowd the immature and growing mind with a variety of intellectual food, adapted to oppress rather than to nourish it. But the success of these philanthropic projectors has been very partial, and calculated on the whole to attest the wisdom of our established system, which, instilling into the boy the first principles of religion, and with them the sanctions and the objects of moral duty, contents itself with cultivating the attention and the taste of its pupil, and with giving him the means of access to the knowledge of his riper years."

Of the less ornamental branches of study, such as the Mathematics and her kindred departments, perhaps, no defence may at this time be required. In an age like the present, there is assuredly no underrating of physical science; and truly her professors may well be proud of the almost incredible triumphs which has been now achieved. What would the barons great and small, and the courtiers or churchmen of the last of our Scottish kings,—to whose era we have just been referring,—have thought, had any one ventured to prophesy that the time was coming when we should possess the command which has now been attained over ocean and distance, whereof the obstacles have been almost entirely surmounted? Would those nobles who toiled with their mounted and armed retainers, over heath, and hill, and dreary wold, have believed that a time would come when more than the heavy and wearisome journey of a summer day could be performed within one short hour?

Or, could the boldest navigator of the olden days have dreamed of the existence of a barque, fitted to defy the adverse winds, lessening not her speed in the calm, and stemming the opposing surges, and of which might be said, as of the ship of the Enchanter,

“Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel.”

Or finally, who could have imagined that, by means of the electric fluid, intelligence might be wafted from one end of the kingdom to another with the unabated rapidity of the subtle agent whose mysteries have thus, as it were, been made the wings of man's willing messenger. Yet it is more to my purpose to observe that even as to the sciences, and the studies which precede them, mere utility is not their sole attraction. As the richest fruit has the sweetest flavour, so the sciences of the greatest practical usefulness, and the pursuits most strictly confined within the limits of accurate deduction, are not without their charms. For it may well be said that, wherever order reigns, their beauty is sure to be nigh. Grace is not limited to what is merely ornamental, she is the handmaid of utility. In the delightful language of Shaftesbury, “There is no one who, by the least progress in science or learning, has come to know barely the principles of Mathematics, but has found that, in the exercise of his mind on the discoveries he there makes, though merely of speculative truths, he receives a pleasure and delight superior to that of sense. When we have thoroughly searched into the nature of this contemplative delight we shall find it of a kind which

relates not in the least to any private interest of the creature, nor has for its object any self good or advantage of the private system. The admiration, joy, or love, turns wholly upon what is exterior and foreign to ourselves; and, though the reflected joy or pleasure which arises from the notice of this pleasure once perceived may be interpreted a *self passion or interested regard*, yet the original satisfaction can be no other than what results from the love of truth, proportion, order, and symmetry in the things without. If this be the case, the passion ought in reality to be ranked with *natural affection*; for, having no object within the compass of the private system, it must either be esteemed superfluous and *unnatural* (as having no tendency towards the advantage or good of anything in nature), or it must be judged to be what it truly is ‘a natural joy in the contemplation of those numbers—*that harmony, proportion, and concord* which supports the universal nature, and is essential in the constitution and form of every particular species or order of beings.’”

But were I to dilate farther on the advantages of academical education, I would be intruding on ground which it does not become me to occupy, and, at the same time, tasking your patience. One feature, however, of this kind of study I may be permitted to notice, as it has always appeared to me sufficient to insure permanence to such a mode of instruction. It is a consideration, my young friends, peculiarly applicable to you; I mean that you are thus settled in a career of competition and mutual intercourse, where character is drawn out in all its varie-

ties, where enterprise is encouraged, modest merit appreciated, and friendships matured, not on the footing of mere companionship, but by means of pleasing and enlightened association, by the genuine display of youthful confidence, and the sympathies of generous impulse. I will not call your avocations here a rehearsal of the drama which is to be acted on the stage of life, in which your part has not yet been assigned; far less do I insinuate that you are to learn here the selfishness of the market place, the reckless indifference of the votary of pleasure, or the plots and chicanery with which the daily intercourse of the world is too often sullied. Quite otherwise. United in the contemplation of those truths which your books are so well fitted to disclose—"those ready companions who can never tire." You will thus see in each other the valuable and enduring qualities on which all true friendship must rest, and by whose aid and consolations your future progress in life may be so- laced, enriched, and delighted. How admirably has this dependence of friendship on classic attainment and estimable characteristics been illustrated by Bishop Taylor, in one of his most popular, and, perhaps, most eloquent Essays:—"Because friendship is that by which the world is most blessed and receives most good, it ought to be chosen amongst the worthiest persons, that is, amongst those that can do greatest benefit to each other, and, though in equal worthiness, I may choose by my eye or ear, that is, into the consideration of the essential, I may take in also the accidental and extrinsic worthiness; yet I ought to give every one their just value; when the internal beauties are equal, these shall help to weigh down

the scale, and I will love a worthy friend that can delight me as well as profit me rather than him who cannot delight me at all, and profit me no more; but yet I will not weigh the gayest flowers, or the wings of butterflies against wheat; but, when I am to choose wheat, I may take that which looks the brightest. I had rather see thyme and roses, marjoram, and July flowers, that are fair, sweet, and medicinal, than the prettiest tulips that are good for nothing; and my sheep and kine are better servants than race-horses and greyhounds; and I shall rather furnish my study with Plutarch and Cicero—with Livy and Polybius, than with Cassendra and Ibrahim Bassa; and, if I do give an hour to these for divertisement or pleasure, yet I will dwell with them that can instruct me—and make me wise and eloquent—severe and useful, to myself and others.” I end this with the saying of Lœlius, in Cicero:—“*Amicitia non debet consequi utilitatem sed amicitiam utilitas.*”

The friendships formed at college are thus, indeed, fitted to endure, for their foundation is neither selfish nor vicious, nor rested on evanescent and trivial recollections. They are hallowed by the sense of mutual benefits. They are embalmed in gifts that are gathered in classic groves and bound in the undying wreaths which blossom in that rich garden, where meditation finds the philosopher, whose reflections are the treasures of ages, whence the orator has gathered his brightest flowers, and the poet a garland redolent of immortal fame. You remember how beautifully Shakspeare has depicted college friendship in the attachment of Valentine to Pro-

teus. That generous youth, speaking with due modesty of himself, and exaggerating, perhaps, the defects which marked his infirmity, boasts as if they were his own proudest ornaments—of the high attainments of his chosen companion :—

I know him as myself; for, from our infancy
We have convers'd and spent our hours together,
And though myself have been an idle truant,
Omitting the sweet benefit of time,
To clothe mine age with angel-like perfection;
Yet hath Sir Proteus (for that's his name)
Made use and fair advantage of his days,
His years but young, but his experience old—
His head unmellow'd, but his judgment ripe—
And, in a word (for, far behind his worth,
Come all the praises that I now bestow),
He is complete in feature and in mind,
With all good grace to grace a gentleman."

To merit such eulogium be all your efforts directed, and then, indeed, may you look back with self-satisfaction to the days of your sojourn here, and cast your thoughts forward in the hope that the studies you have anxiously and faithfully followed may be crowned with success in life, and enriched by many a changeless friendship. But should it unfortunately prove otherwise to any of you, and all your associations be severed by the adverse events of coming years, which no human foresight can avert, still your kindly and improving intercourse here shall not be without its influence on your general character and happiness. The hand that lit the torch of friendship may indeed be cold, but the heart within which that ray has once dawned, in the fervour of youth, will not experience the darkness of utter solitude until its night shall have for ever closed. The voice of the

friend whom you once had shall still speak, as it were, from these walls, and, in your cherished memory, shall still linger the advices and the cautions, and the means of consolation, which have been here showered on you. You will still have laid up a treasure of sound knowledge and generous sympathy, and, as he who has once truly felt the power and grandeur of external nature, may unfeignedly say—

“How oft, in lonely rooms, and ’mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet—
Felt, in the blood, and felt along the heart,
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration.”

So may you, imbued with the recollection of those profound speculations, and heart-stirring disclosures, which have been here unveiled to your fervid and wondering imaginations, recal the voice of your honoured preceptor, as if, amid the misfortune or despondency which may have overtaken a grateful pupil, he thus addressed him, in soothing benediction—

“When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure—when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies—oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me
And these my exhortations.”

There are other, and, if possible, still nobler considerations which this subject suggests. Not only do the high endowments, and lofty contemplations, which the study

of classic literature and philosophical refinement is calculated to call forth, form a weapon of defence amidst the struggles and turmoils of ordinary life. Not only are these equally available as a haven of refuge in the day of distress or discomfiture, and as an ornament and delight amid prosperity, but they are fitted to waft our hopes, on the wings of posthumous fame, to those realms of imagination, peopled by the proud dreams of being remembered and cherished even after our earthly career shall have closed. To die, and not to be forgotten, is, indeed, a heart-thrilling aspiration. To think that the breeze which waves the grass, under whose lowly shelter we sleep, shall still bear the echo of our name to the hearts and homes of thousands, who never listened to our living voice, is a reflection which the proudest sons of genius alone may cherish as the mighty guerdon of their labours. As it has been beautifully said of the works of Milton by his biographer, to whom I have already referred—"Their reputation seems to be still increasing, and we may venture to predict that it will yet increase till some of those great vicissitudes to which all that is human is perpetually exposed, and which all must eventually experience, shall blot out our name and our language, and bury us in barbarism. But even amid the ruins of Britain, Milton will survive. Europe will preserve one portion of him; and his native strains will be cherished in the expanding bosom of the great Queen of the Atlantic, when his own London may present the spectacle of Thebes, and his Thames roll a silent and solitary stream through heaps of blended desolation."

I avail myself also of another illustration of the same subject, which Dr. Symmons extracts from an essay of Maurice Morgan, on the writings of our unrivalled dramatist. Voltaire, it would seem, had, with an unworthy sneer, designated Shakespeare a barbarian, and that sturdy defender of the Poet of England, while indulging in the prophecy that his fame would survive the language of his calumniator, thus ardently expresses himself—“Whatever may be the neglect of some, or the censure of others, there are those who firmly believe that this wild and uncultivated barbarian has not yet obtained one-half of his fame. When the hand of time shall have brushed off his present editors and commentators, and when the very name of Voltaire, and even the memory of the language in which he has written, shall be no more; the Apalachian mountains, the banks of the Ohio, and the plains of Sciola shall resound with the accents of this *barbarian*. In his native tongue he shall roll the genuine passions of nature; nor shall the griefs of Lear be alleviated, or the charms and wit of Rosalind be abated by time.’”

Let me not be misunderstood. I refer to such noble themes only with the view of awakening your sympathies with all that is great and good. We may not reach the starry heights of Philosophy or Poesy, but we may contemplate with ardent admiration the bright galaxies which shine in these radiant spheres. We may not vaunt of attainments which we may never be able to grasp, but the more our minds are familiarised with the thoughts and sympathies of those who fill the proudest

stations among the sons of genius, the more likely are we to be elevated and enlightened, so far as our limited capacities may permit. Nor will such lofty associations unfit us for the ordinary duties of life, or impede us in the dull routine of daily labour in our vocation. To be the most cultivated and refined scholar by no means impairs the usefulness of the citizen, or hardens any one against the endearing charities of social intercourse with those who may not have devoted so much of their energies to these pursuits.

One word more, and I have done.

Having thus spoken of Universities generally, I feel it would be presumptuous in me to offer any observations of my own as to this College. The presence of the eminent gentlemen by whom I am surrounded would forbid me (were I otherwise entitled) doing more than bearing humble testimony to their high and varied accomplishments. But I may be permitted to notice a very gratifying circumstance connected with this and the sister College in this city. It is now nearly twenty years since a visitation took place, under a Commission from the Crown, of the whole of the Scottish Universities; and, in the conclusion of their report of 1830, as applicable to this place, the Commissioners state—“ While we have felt it to be our duty humbly to recommend some important alterations in regard to both the Universities of Aberdeen, as indispensably necessary, it would be injustice to conclude this account of their past and present condition without acknowledging, in the

strongest manner, the just claims which they have to the gratitude of the country. They have contributed in a very high degree to the dissemination of knowledge ; they have silently and unostentatiously raised the intellectual state of Scotland ; and there can be no doubt that they may be rendered still more efficient in carrying forward that improvement in science and philosophy by which the present age is distinguished, and from the progress of which so much is to be anticipated favourable to the best interests and the most elevated enjoyments of this and of future generations.”

On the merits of the proposed alterations here referred to (none of which I believe have been carried into effect) it does not become me to speculate ; but I am satisfied that nothing has occurred, since the period of the inquiry, to render the eulogium thus bestowed less applicable to the present time. My province, however, is not to enter into further detail on this head.

Having gratefully acknowledged your kindness—having offered a few very imperfect remarks on the course of your studies, and endeavoured to point out some of the characteristics of academical tuition, and some of the advantages which it is calculated to secure, I may now release you from this, I fear, somewhat tedious address. If any truth I have attempted to illustrate has been presented to your view in such a light as to aid you in the path of useful reflection—if any aspiration of mine shall have animated you with generous emotion—if my hand have touched one chord thrilling

with noble sympathy, and if my humble name may become in any degree associated with your future meditations, I shall, indeed, be well contented. At all events, although I may not obtain so rich a reward, permit me, with a fervid prayer for your future welfare, and for the increasing honour and enduring prosperity of this University, to bid you *farewell*.